Interview with Jean Mary Wilkowski

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Women Ambassadors Series

AMBASSADOR JEAN MARY WILKOWSKI

Interviewed by: Willis Armstrong

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Q: We're going to be talking about how Ambassador Wilkowski became interested in the Foreign Service and how she progressed in it. Would you start anywhere, Jean?

WILKOWSKI: Yes, Bill, I will. When I was in college, I certainly had no idea of going into the Foreign Service. I was a Journalism major and French minor. My first job was as an instructor at Barry College in Miami, Florida. Among other things I was doing publicity for the college, and I had to cover a very interesting meeting of American Historians who had just come back from Lima, Peru. I thought their experiences were fascinating. I was finishing two years of teaching and getting ready to go to Chicago to take a job with the United Press. I wanted eventually to get into work as a foreign correspondent in Europe.

There was a sociologist at the Miami conference who asked, “Why don't you consider the Foreign Service at the State Department in Washington on your way to Chicago?” I said, “It's a little bit out of the way.” But I did just that, carrying a letter of recommendation to some friend of his who was an Assistant Secretary.

Do you want to ask me questions, or should I just go on?

Q: Oh, just go on from there.

WILKOWSKI: All right. So I did go to Washington, and I stayed there with friends of the family. I called on this Assistant Secretary of State (his name may have been Howland). He suggested I go to the Employment Office, which, of course, is where you go if you're looking for a job. But I wasn't terribly serious about it since I was interested in the United Press job in Chicago.

But I did apply for the Foreign Service. I never will forget what the interviewer said. “You don't know how lucky you are,” he insisted.

“Why is that?” I asked, pretty green and nervous.

“You know,” he replied, “this is October 1944 and we've lost a lot of men to the Armed Forces. We're literally scraping the bottom of the barrel for recruits.” I'll always remember that phrase—that I came from the bottom of the barrel. “We're scraping the bottom of the barrel,” he continued, “by taking in 4-Fs (physically unfit for the military) and women.” Four-Fs came first. [Laughter]

You know, I was too shy to say, “Well, gee, thanks.” Give me a break, or just, “Thank you, good day.” But I said, “Oh, that's interesting.”

And he said, “Would you like to be a vice consul.”

I asked, “What's a vice consul?” He explained and then sent me to another part of the bureaucracy in the old Walker Johnson Building. By midday I had formally applied. I hung around Washington for a month and then was enrolled in the Foreign Service Auxiliary which was the way they did it in wartime. I went to Trinidad, then later took the examination to be a full-fledged FSO. So that's how I got started.

Q: It's almost exactly the same as my wife's experience. (Louise Shaffner Armstrong)

WILKOWSKI: Is that right?

Q: She was a vice consul in the Auxiliary, and they sent her to Marquesas, and then she went to Canada.

WILKOWSKI: I see.

Q: When did you know her? In Montreal?

WILKOWSKI: No, I met Louise first in Washington, I believe. Later we were very close in Geneva, 1955-56, during a round of GATT tariff negotiations. We were both on the U.S. delegation negotiating with France, also the European coal and steel community. We worked for Charlie O'Donnell. That's where Louise and I became friends. We both loved to hike and ski so we were always off on the weekends with other American and Austrian friends to ski and hike in Switzerland and France.

Q: Let's go back to Trinidad now. What did you do in Trinidad and what was it like?

WILKOWSKI: Well, I was, as they told me, a vice consul in Port- of-Spain, Trinidad, then a British Crown Colony. The office consisted of Consul Claude Hall (there for 7 years) and myself. That was the staff plus 4-5 locals. He told me he hated shipping and all these over-bearing sea captains who come in here and cursed all over the place. “You take them over,” he ordered. I was supposed to charm and quiet them, I guess.

They had different problems. The most amusing was the fact that most of them had venereal disease and they had to be cured before they got to the States. So the captain would come in, hem and haw, until I finally asked, “Is it the usual, Captain?” He would say, “Yeah.” So I'd sign the seamen off the ship, to send them out to the U.S. Naval Base or hospital for the 2 weeks treatment. Then I'd sign them back on the ship. I also visaed the crew list, mediated union disputes, etc.

Once during a union dispute the Captain refused to do anything until I signed off some of the offending crew so the ship could sail to the U.S. I also did general consular work —citizenship for Americans, visas for Trinidadians. I had fun with that. Once I told some calypso singers going to the U.S. that one of the requirements was they sing for the Consulate before they got their visa to prove that, indeed, they had a profession and were legitimately en route to make recordings. So we used to have these mini-concerts in the Consulate. [Laughter]

In the meantime, poor old Consul Claude Hall was in the back room doing whatever he did—a lot of political work related to the U.S.-UK base agreement with its legal problems. President Roosevelt had exchanged over- age U.S. destroyers—were they 46 or 67 destroyers—for some strategic war- time bases in the Caribbean. We had a big naval base —Macqueryie—on the north coast.

Q: One of them was Trinidad.

WILKOWSKI: Yes. Trinidad was one of them. There was also Waller Field in the middle of the island—the longest maintenance line in the U.S. Army Air Corps. Indeed, my brother —a pilot—had stopped there on his way to north Africa and Europe. We also had an Army Docksite shipping base on Trinidad—3-5 major installations in all.

So the Consul did all of the base negotiation with the British Colonial Government and with the U.S. armed forces there in Trinidad. I did all the other consular work alone, some economic reporting. There is a lot of cacao down there, as you know. During the war some American candy companies which had gotten their coconut supplies elsewhere came to Trinidad. I remember the Peter Paul people were looking for coconut for their candy bars. There were also exports of lime juice, and small commercial transactions. Finally, we had much to do with the first major crash of a Pan American Airways Clipper plane, including loss of American lives.

Q: What about oil? Were they exporting oil from Trinidad at that point?

WILKOWSKI: Not as extensively as in later years. It was pretty much a limited British concession. I visited the oil fields, which were down in the south of the island. But oil was a minor thing at that time before the big strikes and exports which came later.

Q: Yes. The fuels didn't really come into production until later.

WILKOWSKI: The oil boom for Trinidad came in the late '60s or early '70s, if I recall.

Q: So your shipping was not tanker shipping. It was just miscellaneous.

WILKOWSKI: No. No tankers but big merchant ships from Africa, but more importantly bauxite transhipment from then British Guiana, and a lot of shipping captains would give me the eye and say, “Why don't you come down to B.G. and see the monkeys.” I wasn't too keen on going down there either for monkeys or monkey shines.

Q: You should have gone. It's a fascinating place. I visited there.

WILKOWSKI: No. I had one experience on a ship out of Trinidad bound for New Orleans. I was a work-away and the only woman on board, but I didn't have that experience to guide me. It was just instinct that said, “Better not go down to B.G. as a guest of the captain.”

Q: Instinct is always a good guide. [Laughter]

WILKOWSKI: So, at any rate, that's what I did in Trinidad.

Q: I remember a famous remark by Libby Merchant when he was Ambassador in Canada in regard to a distinguished Canadian who shall remain nameless. He said, “You know, the trouble with that man is, it's nothing wrong with his intellect, it's his instincts that are defective.” He was a very senior man. He was quite right.

WILKOWSKI: Well, I think women are extraordinarily gifted with instinct and with intuition, and I think it's important in diplomacy. A State historian, name of Care, I believe, wrote the first book (sometime in the '50s) about women in the Foreign Service. In there is a quotation from me wherein I emphasize the great complementarities between the gifts of women and the gifts of men. I think they tend to be distinctive. It's crazy to think that women and men are constituted the same in the way they generally think and act.

Q: They're not. I agree.

WILKOWSKI: They're absolutely different.

Q: My first job was teaching in a girl's high school. I learned that.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, men and women are different. But we were made in a complementary fashion. We were created to complement one another, and that is the beauty of men and women working together. As Ambassador John Jova used to say, “Together they create beautiful things.” [Laughter]

Q: You get a multiplier effect, not only biologically.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, that's right.

Q: I think you do. Well, I think it's very important, and it's much too slow in coming. How long were you in Trinidad?

WILKOWSKI: I was there about 18 months with Claude Hall the Consul most of the time, then Ellis Bonnet. From there to Bogota, Colombia. I still hadn't made up my mind whether I wanted to stay in the Foreign Service. To me it was still a war job. I had some exciting times when President Roosevelt died, you know. Claude Hall didn't want to go to the cathedral as the U.S. representative, so there I was up on the altar with all the

dignitaries. It was kind of heady stuff for a 25-year old. It grips you and inflates you. After the Caribbean and Latin America I wanted to see Europe, so I stayed in.

The Bogota assignment was terribly exciting because of the “Bogotazo”- -a national uprising which lasted 8-10 years. It started with the assassination of Gaitan, the political party leader, the break-out of nearly 5,000 prisoners from jails, looting and rioting. The uprising was said to be inspired by Fidel Castro.

My job in the Embassy was economic and commercial reporting. The fireworks started during a lunch hour. People were running in all directions. The Embassy bus dropped us off and then began our nearly24-hour ordeal with much plunder and killing in the streets. We were marooned without food or sleep.

Roy Rubottom and Aaron Brown were our political reporting officers who sent hourly reports to the Department. Willard Beaulac was our Ambassador. Assistant Secretary Norman Armour was in Bogota for the Inter- American conference.

The “Bogotazo” radically changed the history of Colombia, setting Liberals against Conservatives for years in bloody strife. Finally, legislation was passed alternating the presidency between the two parties.

I did coffee reporting, shipping affairs, cost of living, budget, monetary and fiscal policy. Pretty routine things. And then I thought, the Foreign Service is interesting, I've had Trinidad and the problems of U.S. bases overseas, then Bogota, Colombia and Latin America relations. I wanted a change—to take a look at Europe before I decided if the Foreign Service was for life. I was assigned to Milan, Italy and I went there in 1950 to take over the commercial section, did a lot of very interesting work with American companies coming over after the war wanting to invest, have licensing arrangements or engage in imports and exports. We had an excellent local staff, very good people, very supportive and very helpful. They also made good friends.

As a result of the Milan experience I was called back to head the Italian desk at the Department of Commerce. Frankly I didn't care too much about it. I missed being in the mainstream at State. My colleagues proved a different breed. But in some ways it was good preparation for a later assignment to the GATT Tariff negotiations because we needed significant contributions from Commerce and other agencies. So I learned, you know, how to work between agencies in Washington, which is pretty important. That was in the early '50s.

Q: How long were you in Milan? Were you there for the famous election in Italy? No, that was '48, wasn't it?

WILKOWSKI: I was there 1950-51.

Q: Fifty, fifty-one. This was after the Marshall Plan and after that election?

WILKOWSKI: Not quite, AID was still operating there. There wasn't anything major going on in Italy which was trying to get back on its feet economically. It was before the “Miracle” of the sixties.” You remember that Norman Armour's daughter was married to Ambassador James Dunn. He headed our Rome mission. The big thing in Milan was the annual Trade Fair and the Ambassador always brought up a big delegation from the Embassy. Dunn was a good Ambassador. His wife Mary was very gracious and had a good sense of humor. She agreed to have the Italian Garden Club name a rose for her. They told her, “it did well in beds!” The Zellerbachs came after Dunn. Different people—very political and less Foreign Service oriented.

Milan was Europe for the first time. It was a wonderful introduction and made me decide in favor of taking the Foreign Service exam. I was assigned to Paris, took the exam there and then came in. I was Assistant Commercial Attach# in Paris.

Q: This was about '52, '53?

WILKOWSKI: Fifty-three to fifty-six. Then I was sent on TDY from Paris over to Geneva to the GATT Tariff negotiations. Our Ambassador in Paris was Douglas Dillon.

Q: Yes. I know him, as a matter of fact.

WILKOWSKI: Graham Martin was our administrative / consular officer there. I got to know him well, in fact, did some cost of living work for him.

Q: What did you think of Graham Martin?

WILKOWSKI: He was a very controversial figure and a secretive man, as you probably know. He was last living in North Carolina.

Q: I think he is.

WILKOWSKI: I think he used very bad judgment in that case of the classified papers left in the back of his car.

Q: Very intense man, I thought.

WILKOWSKI: Very intense man. Former newspaperman. Not a bad Ambassador, I don't think, but he made strange friends, like Michele Sindona in Italy. I don't believe he ever learned a foreign language, but he did know how to use people—staff and outsiders—and he relied heavily on them for information. I think he was a good collector of facts, a good analyst. There was something mysterious but likable about him. I felt kindly toward him. It was he who later asked me in the early '70s, if I wanted to become an Ambassador. If I did, Washington was asking him what he thought of me. [Chuckle] He would recommend me if I wanted to be an Ambassador, he said.

Q: Well, he did have good judgment.

WILKOWSKI: Thank you. Strange, he always acted as though he was playing a CIA game. He had that inclination to clandestine kinds of operation, secretive, so you never really knew the whole Graham Martin. But he had a soft spot, and he was always very good to me and quite frankly I tried to please him and merit his approval and respect.

Q: I knew him. I found him a very decent guy, really.

WILKOWSKI: Indeed. That's what I want to say. He was very much interested in other human beings. When he was retired and would come wandering into the Department, he would always make a point of looking you up. And it wasn't just for old times sake. It's because he was genuinely interested in others and their work in the Foreign Service.

Q: He was a warmer person than he ever got credit for being, I think.

WILKOWSKI: Oh, yes, he was. He was, and his wife, Dottie, was a lot of fun.

Q: I didn't know her.

WILKOWSKI: In sum, Graham Martin was a mysterious, unfathomable character, who seemed to delight in this image. He seemed more off-putting to men than women.

Q: He was a strange man, more strange than a lot of CIA people. [Laughter]

WILKOWSKI: He dealt with Foreign Service people very fairly, I believe.

Q: Yes, within the Service on a career basis, he was very fair and reasonable.

WILKOWSKI: I think so. He wouldn't hesitate to recommend people. For example, there was a young man working for me. He called me down and asked me what I thought of him. He wanted to recommend him as a Consul General, and I said, “Yes, I thought he could do a good job, but...” and as we were trained to do, listed the positive and the negative with emphasis on the former. Well, he got this consular post, and then almost immediately

pursued a negative trait. It set Graham's teeth on edge. The man was a long time getting his ambassadorship. Indeed, he was a D.C.M. for a very long time.

Q: You had acquired Italian. How about other languages? Did you have Spanish when you were in Bogota, and Italian later, and French?

WILKOWSKI: Well, I was a French minor in college. Indeed, that's one of the projects I'm working on now is trying to encourage exchange scholarships between France and the U.S. When I left college, I had no French-speaking ability though I knew Cornielle, Racine and Moliere. My first speaking language was learned in Bogota. I had to transact business in the Embassy economic section in Spanish. I worked with the coffee producers, exporters and shippers, and so I had to learn Spanish to get the trade trends and statistics. I acquired Spanish, Italian and French. During my tours in the Foreign Service I was interested in languages, and I think I have some facility with them.

Q: You did that as you went along. That was sort of part of your job to learn the local language so you could make it go.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, part of my self-education.

Q: Did you take special language training while you were in those posts?

WILKOWSKI: Yes. I always went in for the course at post in Bogota, on my own in Milan, and in Embassy classes in Rome and Paris, also at the Foreign Service Institute. I took intensive Spanish before I went to Chile, and a refresher before Honduras. I think the greatest lessons I had in Italian came from buying a farm with another Foreign Service Officer in Tuscany. I had to deal with the plumbers and the carpenters and the electricians and the real estate people.

Q: After the tariff negotiations in '56, did you then go to Chile?

WILKOWSKI: Yes, I did, but after a year back in the U.S. After I took the exams in Paris, I was offered mid-career training, either at Harvard Business School or graduate economics at Berkeley. I chose the latter and again your wife Louise and I overlapped.

Q: You were both at Berkeley at the same time?

WILKOWSKI: Yes. We were both at Berkeley together, both studying economics. Looking back on my career, I think I may have made a mistake. I didn't need graduate study in economics. I had this deep interest in business and the activities of American firms overseas. I think it might have gotten me into the corporate world sooner and with greater facility. And it might have led to different things. However, I don't regret my Foreign Service career at all. It's been a good career with only minor complaints—don't we all—as well as appreciation for all the opportunities I had and the marvelous experiences.

Q: What years were you at Berkeley?

WILKOWSKI: I was there from the fall of '56 to the spring of '57. Then I was assigned to Bolivia. By then my father had died and my mother became my responsibility for about 12 years, and I could not take a sick woman up to La Paz.

Q: No, no way.

WILKOWSKI: So the Department kindly switched me to Santiago, Chile. I've forgotten where Louise went from that point.

Q: She came back here to the Department.

WILKOWSKI: Did she?

Q: That's when I met her in '57.

WILKOWSKI: Santiago was very interesting. I did monetary and fiscal policy work in the economic section of the Embassy. It was kind of heady stuff, you know, recommending on $40 million development loans and dealing with the Minister of Finance, and the Manager of the Central Bank, Felipe Herrera—now here in D.C. with the Inter-American Development Bank, I believe. Also I dealt with Enrique Iglesias of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America.

Q: Were you Economic Counselor then?

WILKOWSKI: No, I was Second Secretary, Economic. It was highly educational and I developed some very good relationships. I enjoyed it very, very much. The Klein-Sachs people were there as advisors, also Kenneth Galbraith of Harvard.

Q: The Chilean officials always had a better understanding of economics than almost anybody in Latin America, in my experience.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, they did. They really did.

Q: I used to go to inter-American meetings. The only guys you could really talk to were the Chileans.

WILKOWSKI: They were indeed very savvy. And there was an interesting sidelight to my experience there. A lot of the young men at the Central Bank, the head of statistics and the head of research whom I dealt with, were Communists who later bolted and went up to help Fidel Castro in Cuba. The Department asked me what I knew about these people and I suddenly had an extensive bio-reporting job on my hands as these young men had become some of the leading economic advisors to Castro.

Q: That's a real derogation from their economics education, isn't it?

WILKOWSKI: Yes. Besides a good-sized AID mission in Santiago we had an impressive Economic/Commercial Section headed by Bob Eakens of Texas and Bob Dorr, also Ralph Richardson, Minerals Attach# and 3-4 others of us.

Q: Bob Eakens was an old friend. He worked with me before that when he headed a petroleum division for the Embassy. I'm still in touch with him.

WILKOWSKI: Are you really!

Q: Yes. We exchange Christmas cards. Bob is a very knowledgeable guy in oil.

WILKOWSKI: He was very savvy in the economic field. I always thought Bob was a little awkward though because he was not brought up in the Foreign Service. He was a specialist who came in as a senior officer.

Q: That's right. He's a very domesticated Texan.

WILKOWSKI: Yes. And he always was a bit on guard with the old Foreign Service types, but he was fair and reasonable. Not terribly imaginative, but a pleasant guy to work with.

Q: Wh, he's a nice man.

WILKOWSKI: Yes. We had a good crowd of people in Santiago. I finished there in '59 and went on home leave to Hawaii. Then I went to the GATT tariff negotiations in Geneva, the Dillon round, and was there for about a year and a half. Very interesting assignment. I was deputy to Herman Walker on the U.S. team negotiating with the EEC.

Q: Sixty-sixty one.

WILKOWSKI: GATT was a very interesting assignment. It was the first time that the EEC had applied as an institution to the GATT for admission. As you know its accession had to be negotiated from the combined tariffs of the original six members covered in the Treaty

of Rome of 1953. It was a very complex thing getting all the EC tariffs aligned and then negotiating from a single, new tariff.

I had a second job which was to head up the Spanish accession. The Spaniards were a bit skittish dealing with a woman, despite my efforts at trying to put them at ease speaking Spanish.

Assistant Secretary George Ball was not pleased when the Spaniards came to him and complained that “the U.S. negotiator handling the Spanish accession was too tough.” This after I had first tried to ascertain if they were to be treated as “big boys” or as a developing country. As it turned out, the Spaniards backed off after 3-4 sessions and the negotiations weren't resumed until several months following the Dillon Round.

Q: You were then in the GATT negotiations in '60-'61?

WILKOWSKI: That's right. And then I was assigned to Rome, in '63, and I was there until '66.

Q: Well, I remember we encountered each other for part of that time, because you were Economic Counselor at Rome, weren't you, or Economic Minister?

WILKOWSKI: That was later in 1970-73. On my first Rome tour I started out as deputy to the Economic Minister, Sydney Mellen. I was number two there in the economic section. Sydney couldn't go to a conference in Vienna in 1966 and I represented Rome there.

Q: Sixty-nine, that's when you were Economic Minister?

WILKOWSKI: Yes, '70-'73. I started out as Commercial Counselor because there was an opening there. I can't say I was thrilled, having been DCM and charg# in Central America. Personnel said, “You're going to be an Ambassador and it's better to park you there than

in Washington." [Chuckle] You know, all these cute little arrangements the Department makes.

Q: Now in between Italy you were in Honduras?

WILKOWSKI: Yes.

Q: What was Rome like?

WILKOWSKI: Rome was the second of three assignments in Italy. It involved renegotiation of the civil air agreement which was very, very interesting. It was a negotiation of standstill arrangement on Italian shoe exports, that even brought out Secretary of the Treasury to Rome. At times I didn't feel too honorable doing them as it involved twisting the arm of our allies. But there was some interesting work and involved interesting people from Washington.

Q: You were keeping people from getting good Italian shoes.

WILKOWSKI: I suppose so. It was, after all, U.S. Government policy—protectionist as regards U.S. shoe interests. The shoe work came after I had worked for Sydney Mellen whom I did not get along with at all. Sydney tried hard to have me transferred to the Kennedy round of GATT negotiations in Geneva in 1963, but he didn't succeed. I stayed on.

Q: Not very many people got on with Sydney Mellen.

WILKOWSKI: Freddie Reinhardt was the Ambassador in Rome in my first tour there, and I think he suspected as much. Both Wells Stabler, the DCM, and he were somewhat protective of me. I felt that Sydney could be very arbitrary, and there were other personal problems with Sydney which we can discuss privately. [Tape turned off]

Q: Then you went off to Honduras as the DCM?

WILKOWSKI: That's right, Bill, and I was pretty excited about that though I had the wind taken out of my sails in one of those sensitivity training courses up in Garmisch in Germany. You know, those were the years when outside consultants regarded the Foreign Service as a bunch of stuffed shirts, only Princeton and Yale types (certainly not true), but thought we didn't really communicate well with one another. So some person in management wanted to ape what corporations were doing in sending personnel off to sensitivity training.

Q: I remember that, too.

WILKOWSKI: There was Dean Hinton and all of these administrative counselors from embassies throughout Europe. It was a humbling but fascinating experience. I was to have gone there with another woman FSO, but it turned out I was the only woman in the group. My mother, who had been my dependent for nearly 12 years, had just died, and I was very fragile emotionally.

At any rate, it didn't take the sensitivity process long to unravel me. The so-called hot seat would tear people to pieces. One of the participants in all frankness wanted to know, “What makes you think that you can be a DCM?”

And my answer to that was, “I'm not sure I can until I try. I did not apply for the job. I've been assigned there, and in the Foreign Service you go and do the best you can with the assignment you have. So I'm going to Honduras, and I'm going to do just that.” [Laughter] This reply made the fellow who asked very angry.

So, at lunch that day, I said to the sensitivity trainer, “What kind of a question is that to the only woman in the class? Do you know why? It's because there isn't another person in this room—all men—who has been assigned as a DCM, and that's nothing but sentimental jealousy. They want to put me down.”

He said, “Why didn't you say that? That's what you're supposed to say in a training session like this. It's called leveling and openness.”

And I said, “Well, that's not how we're trained to behave in the Foreign Service.” One has to use discretion and diplomacy.” Now, since I have retired from the Foreign Service, I have become one of the most outspoken women you know. And people say to me, “You were in the diplomatic service?” And I say, “yes.”

Q: You have to remember that diplomatic service doesn't mean just getting along with people and being nice to them. It means getting people to do what you want them to do and having them like you just the same.

WILKOWSKI: And think it was their idea.

Q: And think it was their idea. And you use this more inside than you do outside because there are certain conventions in dealing with foreigners, and the code does work when you're dealing with fellow Americans.

WILKOWSKI: You hit upon something very important. When I was in the Foreign Service, people asked me, “Is it difficult being a woman?” I usually said, “No,” rather than labor the subject. But negotiations within the Foreign Service were usually far and away more difficult than on the outside with foreigners. I was accepted on the outside as a representative of the U.S. Government (sex was ignored). If I was assigned to work with this ministry or that, the people there knew they had to do business with me and they did. Whereas within the Service, there was this terrible competition for promotion. Obviously men preferred to compete with their own. There was no open jealousy, it was always subtle and unspoken, but felt. I had to ignore it and get on with the job. There was tension, and you had to be extremely careful within your organization not to step on toes, offend sensibilities, but it tended to be one-way. That was my experience.

Q: I once had a compliment from some foreigner about what a good job Americans do of negotiating, which wasn't the normal compliment we got from foreigners. And I said, “Well, you know, one reason is we get so much practice at home.”

WILKOWSKI: That's right.

Q: We're always beating up with each other's agencies, beating each other up.

WILKOWSKI: In Washington, that's certainly true.

Q: And I spent years fighting the Commerce Department, and, you know, I wouldn't let them in the room if I could help it.

WILKOWSKI: Commerce. Commerce was something else from my 2 years experience there on TDY.

Q: Well, Commerce was really a bunch of clucks.

WILKOWSKI: Sure they were. They were not first-class people except at the top.

Q: Once in a while, but they didn't last long if they were good. They found a job somewhere else.

WILKOWSKI: That's right. I had two assignments there, one as the Italian desk officer and one with Michel George over in export control.

Q: Well, Michel and I were in business on COCOM for a thousand years, it felt like.

WILKOWSKI: And Murray Renert in export control. Murray was very nice to me.

Q: Yes, he was all right.

WILKOWSKI: I was assigned to Paris to work for Sid Jacques in COCOM, and by the time I got there somebody in the Embassy had jumped in and taken my job, and I was given what he had left. And, you know, I still don't feel very kindly towards that person. But that's the way it is.

Well, back to Honduras. Yes, I went there, notwithstanding the fact that some of my colleagues at Garmisch at the sensitivity course thought that I was totally unqualified! or just too zealous to be honest. Ambassador John Jova was chief of mission and a man of great sensitivity, and we got along just well. I learned something from him that I had never felt before, certainly not with Sydney Mellow, that is, Jova valued a woman's opinions, and insights. Back to our earlier statement that men and women each have something distinctive to contribute.

Now Roz Ridgway, former Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, doesn't like to make these distinctions. In fact, she detests the label “woman ambassador.” I hesitate to try to analyze that but I did feel that in Honduras I became really conscious of the fact that my intuitions and instincts were useful in problem solving. At least John Jova made me feel so.

Q: Jova is a very civilized guy, indeed.

WILKOWSKI: Very sensitive, very cultured, man.

Q: Yes, very civilized.

WILKOWSKI: So he made me feel more competent than I had ever felt, and made to feel so. I think I became more competent.

Q: Of course.

WILKOWSKI: And things worked out well. We had the famous BALPA (personnel reduction) exercise where we had to rip through the Embassy and cut out about a third to a half of our complement. We had a big AID and military mission there, also a large Peace Corps of over 300.

Q: You're saying that aid to Honduras alienates the Contras? [Laughter]

WILKOWSKI: Not quite. But we had a very difficult AID mission director who thought he was chief of mission, and was a thorn in the side of the Ambassador all the time. I was part buffer, part intermediary. Honduras was a good experience in overall management and program direction, also handling a lot of people with diverse missions and assignments: AID, military, Peace Corps, USIA, and many visiting firemen.

There was the Nelson Rockefeller mission. I was the control officer for that. It was pretty exciting. You remember Rockefeller was shot at in Honduras—the first stop on his trip to Latin America. That called for coordination and involvement of the entire mission and wives! Also we had the famous soccer war between Honduras and El Salvador. John Jova had left post for a new assignment. I was charg#. The Hondurans ungraciously contended Jova knew the war was coming and, left before. That was July 14. It lasted 10 days. The experience of being in charge of a mission of over 300 was my really big break. I was in charge in Honduras for about four months before the new Ambassador Hewson Ryan, came in.

The Salvadorans drove 18 miles across the border into Honduras and shelled the border area heavily with artillery fire. They also flew C-40s over and bombed Tegucigalpa. Electricity and communications were cut and, of course, the airport was intermittently closed. It was like being under siege and there were some casualties in the American community. The biggest human problem involved the 52,000 Salvadoran squatters in Honduras.

The Honduran Government rounded them up at gunpoint and threw them in the soccer stadiums in San Pedro Sula in the north and Tegucigalpa in the central highlands. The Salvadorans so incarcerated were left without provision for their care—limited water, sanitation, no blankets, food, shelter, no medicine.

Meanwhile, the Honduran Government from the President through the Prime Minister was after the U.S. to supply defensive arms and ammunition.

The Embassy was faced with two policy issues: (1) to become involved in the humanitarian emergency, not only the incarcerated Salvadorans but thousands of Hondurans displaced from their homes in the war zone on the border and also without basic human needs; (2) to respond positively or negatively to the arms request.

The Embassy's recommendation on (2) was negative; indeed a policy of “even-handedness” between El Salvador and Honduras was almost immediately set in Washington. On (1) we recommended basic assistance and promptly levied a significant request on U.S. Army HQ in Panama. We flew in 10 plane loads of assistance. We encountered problems with the President's wife (!) who wanted help to go only to the Hondurans. We ignored her pleas and much of the help went to the Salvadorans who were in the majority.

We also called in and assisted observers from the OAS. We were very busy. It was a time for rapid decisions, sound decisions, and judgments. We were attacked many times by demonstrators, and I had to give clear and careful instructions to the Marine Guard Detachment.

Q: It was the soccer war with El Salvador, wasn't it?

WILKOWSKI: That's right. There had been...

Q: The Salvadorans outnumber the Hondurans by about four to one.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, they have a real population problem. The whole trouble started when squatters from El Salvador moved in on the Hondurans around San Pedro Sula, taking over untilled lands. It was a case of land occupation. They just didn't have enough space in Salvador for their population. This created tensions which flared up at soccer games between the two countries. Pressures built up until the Salvadoran army just decided to move into Honduras.

Q: They've still got the same problems, so why shoot each other?

WILKOWSKI: It's not easy to tell them. There was a little dust-up in Tegucigalpa when the Salvadorans came over to play football, minor pushing and shoving there. But when the Hondurans went to Salvador, that's when the thing really hit the fan and popular sentiment got out of hand. There was terrible fighting after that football game. A lot of Hondurans were stopped on their return, spat upon, and worse, bags of— believe it or not—bags of urine were thrown at them. I can't imagine people collecting this for such an occasion, but they did.

Q: That's what the students did at the Democratic convention, you know.

WILKOWSKI: Really? I didn't know that.

There was another problem which involved differing points of view and interpretation of the events between Embassy Managua and Embassy Tegucigalpa. We had our own “mini-war” as Managua reported far too sympathetically to the Salvadoran military, even assuming some of their arrogant, over-bearing manners.

The Ambassador there was so hard-nosed he had the gall to send his own political officer over to Tegucigalpa. What else with a woman DCM in charge. We managed to clip his wings, set him straight and send him back. After all, Honduras was invaded and bombed

because of tempers over a football game and resentment over land squatters. A real cause for war?

When the radio reported post-game actions, the people of Honduras reacted by simply attacking these Salvadoran squatters up in the north- central part of the country. They shot and harassed them. There was a funny little story about one of the American bishops in Honduras, a Dominican, who was approached by a Salvadoran Madam of a house of prostitution and her little bevy of girls, asking for protection. They were all Salvadorans, of course—squatters of a different sort.

Q: What did he do, start a nunnery? [Laughter]

WILKOWSKI: No, he didn't start a nunnery. But he kept the Madam overnight at his place, which, for appearances was bad. But he was giving her sanctuary. He got her on the plane the next day. He told the story to us at the Embassy, and it was hysterical

It was a very exciting time with the many policy issues and tensions. There were over 56,000 Salvadorans who were simply herded into the two stadiums. There was a real human problem there, human suffering. Before recommending assistance I asked the President of Honduras if he had any objections to such assistance. “No. If you want to send relief, fine.”

Then we had Peace Corps people straying across the lines, who eventually had to be bailed out of a Salvadoran jail—this despite my strict orders to keep out of the war zone. In another instance a bomb dropped from a C-47 landed in the house of a Peace Corps volunteer. He called me and said, “You're in charge. What are you going to do? A bomb just came through my roof and narrowly missed my baby's crib.”

I said, “The baby alive there?”

“Yes.”

“Did it explode?”

“No.”

I said, “Count yourself lucky.” [Laughter]

Q: So what's new?

WILKOWSKI: The President and Prime Minister kept calling me at all hours of the night, pleading for the Americans to send arms. And they couldn't understand our policy of even-handedness, because they said, “We're under attack. You're supposed to be our friends.”

Well, after all of this, I guess, Washington decided that maybe I could handle something, so that's when I was told an ambassadorship was in the wings. I was sent to Rome to wait. And then I got my post in Africa.

Q: You were in Rome the second time after '60...

WILKOWSKI: Sixty-nine to '73.

Q: Sixty-nine, '73. That's when you were Economic Minister?

WILKOWSKI: Yes, starting out as Commercial Counselor, but for a very short time, then stepping into chief of the economic section.

Q: What major problems of a substantive nature did you think important while you were in the job of Economic Minister in Rome?

WILKOWSKI: Well organizational, for one thing. We had all these U.S. Government agency reps—dukes in their duchies. It was a management problem. The Treasury Attach# considered himself quite autonomous, but was in the economic section. We had the Agricultural Attach#, formerly in the Dutch Foreign Service, who was ultra-

autonomous, he thought, and we had a Maritime Attach#. We also had a Civil Air Attach#, and a Commercial Counselor. I had to hold staff meetings once a week with that disparate group and give some leadership direction and coherence. There were 56 people in the economic section. Italy's role in the EEC occupied much time.

But then there were the usual bilateral problems—trade and investment with the Italians, getting the Italians to see the wisdom of our positions, vis a vis the EEC and getting their votes, of course. And visitors. You know, Congressmen and businessmen all the time coming in.

Q: Endless visitors, I'm sure.

WILKOWSKI: We had the chicken war and the citrus wars with the EEC at that time. The big problems were organization and management and then this leadership-by-a-woman thing that some had trouble adjusting to. The Dutchman, who was the Agricultural Attach#, was impossible. I sort of ignored him. We had a very fine Treasury Attach#, and we worked very, very well together. I was also responsible for policy guidance, the management oversight of economic and commercial work at seven constituent posts—Palermo, Naples, Genoa, Florence, Trieste, Milan, and Turin. I traveled to them for special events—trade fairs, and delegations.

Q: Venice?

WILKOWSKI: Venice, no. Venice was handled by Trieste. Al Fidel was the Consul General there. We shut down Venice. We kept a beautiful floor on a villa, if I recall, and we had a speedboat there, none of which I took advantage of because if you used it, you had to sort of blow the dust away and sleep on a cot. I didn't go there.

Q: Well, I'm very sympathetic, having tried to run the economic section in London with all the independent sovereignties that you had to contend with. Sometimes they were easy to get along with and sometimes not. I don't think we had a Maritime Attach#.

WILKOWSKI: They all wanted a minimum of interference, of course.

Q: They wanted support on everything and they didn't want to have to tell you what they were doing. I even had the FBI unit in the Economic section.

WILKOWSKI: Did you really?

Q: Yes. That was very helpful. They were good people. [Chuckle]

Now, on your appointment as Ambassador to Zambia, what was your state of mind on hearing of it?

WILKOWSKI: As I told you, Graham Martin had called me down and said, “I want to know how you feel. Do you want to be an Ambassador?” I gulped a bit as someone in Washington had said, “You know you're going to be an Ambassador, so why not wait it out in Rome as Commercial Counselor, which is better than in Washington.” So when Martin called me, I countered with, “What do you think?” I almost said, “I have to go home and ask my mother,” which was about what I would have done ten years previous. [Laughter]

Q: A man would say, “I've got to talk to my wife.” [Laughter]

WILKOWSKI: I persisted, “What do you think, Mr. Ambassador?” He just leaned back in his chair and shook his head in disbelief. “How could this woman be so dumb,” was written all over his face. Finally, he leaned forward in the chair and eyed me very keenly and said, “I think you can do anything you set your mind to.”

Q: Well, that's a good comment.

WILKOWSKI: I said, “Well, thank you, Mr. Ambassador. Then I would welcome your recommendation when you go back to Washington.” So the next thing I knew, dear Cleo Noel was on the telephone, calling me from Washington. He was in Personnel then before

his fateful Somalia ambassadorship. He said, “Well, Jean, how would you like to go to Zambia?”

And I inquired, “As what?”

He said, “Knock it off. As chief of mission, of course.” [Laughter]

I was pretty excited, of course. Some people say, “Endsville, Africa. Why do they send all the career people and women to Africa?” But I thought, “Gee, you know, it's fine. I'll go.” And so I went back to Washington for the usual swearing-in, briefings, and consultations with the academics. Then I went back to Rome to buy a lot of clothes which were totally inappropriate for Zambia. [Laughter]

[End Tape 1, Side 1] [Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

WILKOWSKI: ...and you think you're God Almighty with that title Ambassador—a strange thing that comes over one. I tried to do it right, blessed myself and flew Zambia Airlines. But before taking off from Rome a funny thing happened. Graham Martin called me down to his office. He said, “I shouldn't be telling you this, but I have to tell you confidentially.”

There had been a Russian defector in Zambia who had been moved out with a stopover in Rome for some reason. At any rate, the Zambians had given him a passport calling him something like Aaron Freeman, or John Freeman. Graham told me this, reaffirming his keen interest in clandestine things. I got a fright that he might want to introduce me. Then I thought, how very humane for President Kaunda to handle it as he had, why the stop of the defector in Rome. I do not know unless the Zambians were turning him over to the Americans at the Embassy. It was a curious thing that happened just before I went down to Zambia.

There was strong competition in economic development in Zambia between the Eastern Bloc and the West. Yet, the U.S. had no AID mission. What were the key issues and my

duties down there? We were bystanders in this contest being pulled back from assistance in the sixties. What were the key issues and my duties? Primarily to get the Embassy up and really running. I was the third American Ambassador there since 1964. I went down there in '73 and remained for 3-1/2 years on assignment. And I was there for the tenth anniversary of independence in '74.

Zambia was in good economic shape then. Copper prices were up and the oil crisis had yet to arrive. We were a primary target of all those London bankers, City Bank and the rest that were in Africa looking for placement of funds. So we had a steady parade of people wanting to loan money, and sell major equipment (aircraft and transportation) to the government. The major activity in Zambia, I soon learned, was not bilateral economic relations. We had but one American businessman in the whole country and 2,000 American missionaries. Political relations were limited mainly to gaining Zambian support for our positions at the UN.

Our biggest brief and area of interest, of course, was regional politics in southern Africa. Lusaka was the preeminent political listening post for that entire area: Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Namibia, and the newly independent states of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland, the BLS countries.

We had the freedom fighters and liberation movement leaders from all of those countries. They were exciting times because the South Africans were constantly infiltrating into Rhodesia and Zambia to harass and undermine these political refugees. There were many refugee camps in Zambia. It was important, I felt, that U.S. representatives get to know the leaders of these liberation movements—to have some communication with them so as to be in a position of easy transition once these colonies were free. Mr. Kissinger felt differently, but together with Ambassador Bev Carter in Tanzania we kept up a steady drumbeat, recommending to the Department that early contacts were important. He came to accept our view. He finally authorized communication, but he did it in his own

ambiguous style. I believed (with my DCM questioning) that we were given all the authority we needed highly conditional as it was.

President Kaunda had been offended because he had been invited to the White House by President Nixon, and then brushed off at the last minute, so I thought it important that we...

Q: Why was he rejected?

WILKOWSKI: President Nixon changed his mind because he reportedly had other things on his mind in higher priority areas. But you know how sensitive Africans are. The President just canceled the meeting without offering an alternative date. He never reinstated it. It was my hope we could patch this situation up and make amends.

One of the biggest problems the U.S. had in Zambia was Africa's antagonistic feeling about U.S. intervention in Vietnam. We didn't get a thaw on that until Kissinger negotiated the peace treaty in Paris and until Lyndon Johnson died. Those two events took place within a period of about four days, if I recall. I remember getting a telephone call from President Kaunda. He asked, “Do you have a condolence book for signature at the embassy?”

I said, “Yes, we will have one.” I didn't have one.

The President said, “I would like to come over to express my regrets and condolences.”

So I said, “And when would that be, Mr. President?” Well, he said he would come over with some of his cabinet members, and that would be at 5:00 that evening and this was something like 11:00 in the morning. So, zip, out with the administrative officer to get a book at a local store, drape President Johnson's picture in black and ready the Embassy lobby and staff.

President Kaunda came with 14 members of his entourage. There were party members and cabinet members, and the entire lobby was filled with people. He came dressed

in black, walked over to the book and signed it, then came to me and shook my hand. The Prime Minister pushed me in the back and said, “You have to say something.” So I remember walking slowly to the stairs and saying something about Lyndon Johnson and his...

Q: I assume that was done with a lack of enthusiasm?

WILKOWSKI: No, I was just collecting my thoughts to speak, and I did, on President Johnson's ideals of racial equality, the significance of the peace treaty on Vietnam and our relief to disengage. Anyhow, it went over very well, and the Prime Minister grabbed me and said into my ear in his stage whisper, “That's just what we wanted to hear.” I was comforted. [Laughter] So that was that. But that occasion was a turning point in our bilateral relations. Things became much warmer. It was an entirely different situation from my arrival at post. The Zambians kept me waiting 21 days to present my credentials. The Chinese Ambassador had arrived within a day of my own arrival in Zambia, and he presented credentials within three days. I was kept waiting 21 days to show Zambian displeasure with U.S. engagement in Vietnam. Once at the opening of Parliament, when the President spoke, he broke into tears as he had done on other occasions when talking about the need for peace in the world and his displeasure with U.S. foreign policy in Asia. He was famous for his fluttering a white handkerchief. After the Paris treaty, the President became openly friendly and kind to me as the U.S. representative.

Turning to U.S. foreign policy objectives in southern Africa. The context was important. You had two Portuguese colonies, Angola and Mozambique, which had been colonies for 500 years. They were on the verge of becoming independent in the mid-seventies when I was posted to Zambia, Angola and Mozambique still have their troubles in new-found independence. Then there was Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, a runaway colony with its unilateral declaration of independence. And you had all of these freedom fighters making a sanctuary and a haven out of Zambia. It was a messy political situation which absorbed

almost as much of my time as an observer than did strictly bilateral issues with Zambia. Indeed the evolving regional situation was often the subject of our bilateral discussions.

Zambia was in the middle of all this, and the idea was to understand what was going on and to tell the United States about developments and our on site assessment; also what role we might play. It wasn't that we had big economic or trade relations, but politically the United States was looked to as a potential intermediary, a moderator. Indeed, as you know, we did play that role with the Kissinger initiative and the Lancaster House agreements. Sure, the British were much more directly concerned, but we played a catalytic role. It started with our early contacts with the liberation movement leaders and culminated in a turn in U.S. policy (more engaged) enunciated by Kissinger in Lusaka on his first visit to Africa following a UN meeting in Nairobi. So it was the need for the U.S. to understand the southern African situation, the position of the Zambian Government on it, and Kaunda's position as a leader in southern Africa and a leader in Africa. As you know, he's been head of the OAS, and even now he plays a significant catalytic role in South Africa.

Q: How old a man is he by now?

WILKOWSKI: Right now he is, I think, 67. I always looked at President Julius Nyerere as the brains of southern Africa, and Kaunda as the heart of southern Africa. He's a more emotional, sensitive person, less an intellectual than Nyerere.

So we had to deal with that regional political problem and report on it. I also felt that we might be missing a bet on the economic side. The Chinese were building their railroad from the Indian Ocean into the heart of Zambia. The Russians were busy at their little work trying to get mining concessions and help with a lot of economic assistance, and we were doing nothing in these areas. We were just sort of sitting there observing, getting Zambia to side with our UN positions, etc., but doing precious little to endear ourselves other than carry our responsibilities as world leader. We needed to relate practically.

So I started something small—even minor—to get the Agricultural Attach# out of Kenya to come and visit Zambia and to work with the private farmers there, to try to work with some of the government people on a very informal practical basis on raising enough food to feed themselves, rather than import. Eventually, I negotiated the first PL 480 loan. After I left, an AID mission was established and more practical assistance given.

I also felt that security was deteriorating. We had bombings all the time—allegedly due to South African undercover attach#s, or rivalry between liberation factions—one never knew for sure. Indeed, there was one bomb that went off just around the corner from me, across the street. I was always attending funerals of one or another liberation movement member. And so I felt...

Q: Who was really knocking them off? Was it indeed the South Africans?

WILKOWSKI: You never knew whether it was or it wasn't. Our intelligence was never that good or consistent, but it seemed the South Africans and Rhodesian collaborators were more clever and better equipped; every faction seemed to be doing a little harm to the other, if in opposition.

Then we had a terrible situation develop with a random shooting by Zambian soldiers of some American tourists near Livingston on the Zambezi River. There were two Canadians and two Americans in a tourist group. They were down at Victoria Falls on the Rhodesian side by the river's edge. All of a sudden, a Zambian soldier patrolling on a cliff on the other side went berserk and just shot them up. He killed the two Canadians. They fell into the Zambezi River and crocodiles got them. The two Americans hid behind boulders and rocks on the Rhodesian side. Later they were rescued in the night by Rhodesians and taken to the Wankie coal mine properties. They sent me a note telling me exactly what had happened.

The truth of their statement, I mean, their eyewitness account, was totally different from what the Zambians were claiming in the local press. So I had this problem of conscience, how do you deal with that sort of thing, or should you? I took an African colleague into confidence. He advised silence. But contrary to his advice I sought out the President's private secretary, gave him a copy of the victim's letter and said I thought the President should hear it from the other side. Naturally I had no reason to go public. Nothing further was said by the government.

The occasion resulted in close collaboration with the Canadians who had just established a mission. They hadn't even secure communications so I invited them to use ours. They were pouring a lot of aid in to Zambia and so the Canadian parliament seized upon this attack on their citizens. They wanted to cut off all aid to Zambia. “They're killing our people,” was the angry position of the Canadian public.

Q: This was what year?

WILKOWSKI: Oh, 1974, I believe. So I told Ambassador Broadbridge, my Canadian colleague, that I thought that, since they had suffered loss of life, they should go first in seeking indemnification from the Zambians and that we would follow depending on results of their efforts. It was messy, because the Zambians didn't want to pay for the damage that they had done, but we finally did get a monetary settlement. It was important, I thought, that they recognize this violation of international law. Whether they could afford it or not, I felt they just had to pay something and learn how to be a responsible world community. [Laughter] The two Americans lost time off from their jobs, income as well as the cost of their incomplete round-the-world travel and medical expenses.

Q: If there's a price on it, it impresses a little more. It's like the two by four on the mule.

WILKOWSKI: The Zambians screamed in objection. “How can we do this? Our own citizens—Zambians—are being shot up all the time on the border.” That was true. There

were all sorts of booby traps down there, planted either by Rhodesians, South Africans or both. But the Zambians feared a deluge of monetary claims from Zambian relatives.

Q: Well, that's just normal African social life.

WILKOWSKI: Right, I told the Zambians, “Well, that's your problem, you know.” The Zambians countered that it would set a precedent. “We'll have debate.”

“That's your problem. In all justice there were two Americans who saved for an around-the-world tour. They lost their tour, their savings, and six months out of work because of injuries.” Anyhow, the Zambians paid up.

To improve security we got the U.S. Marines in. After that I set about getting the Zambian Foreign Minister to visit the U.S. in preparation—I hoped—for a visit from President Kaunda—long postponed since Nixon days.

Q: You hadn't had Marines in your Embassy before?

WILKOWSKI: No, absolutely not. The Zambians were against it; had even—some years earlier—ruled against an Air Attach# shuttling between Mauritius and Zambia.

Q: Oh, my.

WILKOWSKI: Eventually, I got the Zambian Foreign Minister to the U.S. and a visit with Kissinger. Finally, we got Kaunda to the White House where he promptly said all the wrong things as regards U.S. disregard for the injustices of southern Africa—”here is the America of Washington and Lincoln, the champion of democracy of yesteryear, etc.” That made Kissinger furious and—believe it or not—I was held responsible. To this day when Kissinger sees me, he calls me, “My nemesis.” [Laughter] From him I consider this an accolade.

Q: He fired me, too [Laughter] He didn't fire you, but he fired me.

WILKOWSKI: He tried to by telephone but Africa is a long way from Washington. Those were pretty exciting, heady times. Well, okay, Zambia ends, I came back to the United States under a few clouds, which we could discuss privately. I don't know who saved my skin and protected me from the Secretary but someone did and I'm grateful. As usual, there were no assignments ready for me—a bad sign. If your transfer happens to coincide with an opening at some post, fine. That's the Foreign Service. I became a diplomat-in-residence at Occidental College, which was hardly Siberia, but it was not an immediate second ambassadorship. But that's how the Foreign Service works more often than not, unless there's been a lot of buttering-up with the in-group.

Q: A rather comfortable Siberia.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, I did a lot of lecturing. I did over a hundred lectures out there, as well as being available to consult with students, faculty or alumni.

Q: Primarily on Africa, or...

WILKOWSKI: Yes, southern Africa.

Q: Southern Africa.

WILKOWSKI: I also recruited for the State Department. That was very interesting because I lectured up and down California and around the United States, too. I made some very interesting trips.

Q: That was from '74, '75?

WILKOWSKI: Later. I was in Zambia from 1973-77. Oh, I forgot to tell you another “accomplishment,” referred to earlier in passing. After getting Kaunda to the States, I got Kissinger to Zambia to make the important policy statement, shifting U.S. “negligence” to

“concern and involvement” in the regional problems of southern Africa. I also got Duke Ellington to Zambia. [Laughter] Similarity.

Q: That would be easier.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, Kissinger made a momentous speech in Lusaka on U.S. foreign policy in southern Africa. To me it was the answer to all of those urgent cables I had been sending. If you read Helen Kitchen's monograph—she considers that speech a turning point in our policy in southern Africa, too. She's with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The U.S. had been utterly rhetorical before, just words, words, words on justice, majority rule, and so forth. But eventually Kissinger put his shoulder to the Lancaster House agreements and got down to work on them and eventually there was movement on Rhodesia becoming independent Zimbabwe. It's true that my successors did far more in participating in negotiations in London than I ever thought of doing, but I felt satisfied that in my mission we laid the groundwork toward a significant change in policy on southern Africa.

Q: And you got the Secretary of State to speak up on the African question.

WILKOWSKI: Exactly, that's right.

Q: When he was Secretary of State.

WILKOWSKI: Yes. His visit to Zambia was a big success, even though he didn't see hippopotamus down at the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls. Of course, he held me personally responsible for that, blaming me for “too many FSOs” in the boat we provided, even though my niece (visiting) and I were the only others on board plus his phalanx of Secret Service (the real overload).

Q: He does have occasional touches of humor. You should have said we didn't have hippopotamus on our payroll.

WILKOWSKI: Bill, he might have gotten personal at that point. I ran that risk.

Q: You could ask the CIA. They got all kinds of people on the payroll.

WILKOWSKI: Yes.

Q: I understood, way back when—and I guess it's declassifiable now—but way back when I had the British desk in the '60s, after I came back from Canada, I had British, Canadian, Scandinavian, Irish, Maltese and West Indies. I understood then that we had been providing various forms of subvention for quite a number of African leaders, including Kaunda. I wouldn't ask you to confirm or deny that.

WILKOWSKI: No, I simply couldn't comment on that.

Q: But it was widely said, should we say, around town that this was the case.

WILKOWSKI: I know. We also had some very, very touchy...

Q: I'm sure the British were doing it, too.

WILKOWSKI: ...problems with Angola and arms to Angola, if you recall, and I had a terrible dustup with Dick Clark. It's funny. When I have problems with people like that, I immediately forget their names. Our Assistant Secretary of State—Dick Moose. I could tell you a horror story about that.

Q: Is that the older or the younger Moose?

WILKOWSKI: Oh, younger Moose, I think. He was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. He had been Under Secretary for Administration.

Q: His father had the African division, and I had a hell of a fight with him back in 1946 or '47 over the French controls on currency in Morocco, because the Moroccans claimed that by our treaty with the sultan, going back to, I don't know, the Monroe Administration or Adams or somebody, that we did not have to comply with French currency regulations. And, of course, the French were responsible for currency because it was part of the franc zone under the European community under the Marshall Plan. And this eventually ended up with a real dustup in court and all over the place by Americans who had gone into business in Morocco and could see this loophole.

What they were doing was bringing quantities of things that the French were not importing for currency reasons. They'd bring them into Morocco and then sell them in France for francs, and then turn around and buy more dollars and go ahead, you know. That was a real loophole in the French system. Mr. Moose ran the African division, and Doug MacArthur and Elim O'Shaughnessy were running WE in Europe and I was in commercial policy, and we had periodic meetings with Mr. Moose. We never could dislodge him from this position.

WILKOWSKI: Well, I never knew the father, but I had quite enough of the...

Q: He was so dedicated to Africa, you know.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, I had quite enough of the son. However, I saw Dick Moose at a meeting a couple of years ago and he'd aged tremendously. His hair was snow white, and he was reasonably civil. But I felt this was another situation of unfairness where people are in position of authority and use too much of it. I, myself, may have been guilty of this at times. You begin to use your authority carelessly and at times can be excessively harsh on other people. It's just the wrong way to go. You only become less harsh, I think, the older you get. It's just too bad they don't use us now in our stage of grand wisdom now that we're senior citizens. [Laughter]

Q: The argument with Moose was about Angola?

WILKOWSKI: It was about meeting Kaunda. Do you want to hear this story?

Q: Yes. I think it's relevant, important.

WILKOWSKI: Well, it's simply a problem that every Ambassador runs into. Along comes a Senator, Dick Clark from Iowa, and Dick Moose, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and Clark wanted to see Kaunda alone. I said, “Goodness, Senator, this is going to be very awkward. This is the eve of President Kaunda's historic meeting with Prime Minister Botha from South Africa at Victoria Falls. It's very important for the State Department to know what he's thinking about at this time and what he intends to do. I'm sorry, but I made the appointment for both of us and Kaunda expects both of us. If you want to meet with him privately, you can raise the question.”

“No,” said Clark, “you have to call him first and tell him that I want to meet with him alone.”

And I said, “Well, we're just about a half-hour before the meeting. It would be rude to call. I think we should just go through with it, and you can play it by ear.” So then Moose and Clark buzzed their heads together in the corner, and came back and allowed we should all go. So we set forth in the car, flags flying, over to State House, and got in and went to the meeting. By the way, Moose, without even asking, brought his wife along!

Q: To this meeting?

WILKOWSKI: To this meeting. So there was Moose and his wife; Dick Clark; Mark Chona, the President's Executive Assistant, and myself. Everything was chummy, and we were into the meeting about 10, 15 minutes when Moose stood. He just got up on his feet and said, “Well, Mr. President, I know you'll want to meet with the Senator alone. You have important things to discuss because you'll be meeting with Prime Minister Botha tomorrow.” By the way, it was scheduled in a railway car perched perilously over

Victoria Falls, halfway in Rhodesia, half in Zambia—the Zambians laughingly called it the "Chattanigger Choo-Choo," which I thought was hysterical. [Laughter] Chattanigger Choo-Choo.

Q: That's great.

WILKOWSKI: So, Moose stood up, and Mark Chona, who was taking notes, looked puzzled at me. He raised his two open hands to me with an expression of, "What does this mean?" I shrugged my shoulders, "Beats me."

"And so we will leave you," said Moose dramatically as he and his wife left. I sat there glued to the chair. Dick Clark glowered at me, and Kaunda said, "Mr. Senator, I want you to know we never have any secrets from the American Ambassador, so let us continue with this meeting."

Q: Saved by the other side. [Laughter]

WILKOWSKI: So we continued with the meeting.

Q: He could have always found out from the Zambians afterwards what happened that day.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, of course.

Q: Well, you were dead right. That's what Jim Akins did with Kissinger in Saudi Arabia.

WILKOWSKI: Exactly. It happens all the time in the Foreign Service.

Q: But you had a better point than Akins. The Secretary of State can say, "I'm going to see this guy alone." He's got every right to do that, because you're working for the Secretary of State. And you were working for Moose—sort of—but the Senator had no business to instruct you.

WILKOWSKI: That's right. I recall what happened after the meeting, there was a brief private session as they walked down the hall. I must say, Kaunda was gallant; he always was. He had that way.

Q: He was a decent guy.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, very decent. Even when I returned last year en route back from a business trip to South Africa I had to visit Zambia to evaluate a VITA development project and Kaunda had a working breakfast for me. It was very cordial, very nice. He's a very decent man. He gave me his picture, signed it, and I have it.

Well, that was Zambia. I think I've covered everything. And after that, I did the diplomat-in-residence stint and ended up quite nicely there. Got an honorary degree with—oh, goodness. Who was Under Secretary of State under Jimmy Carter with the law firm? Christopher. Warren Christopher. He was on the board of Occidental, so I had some very good associations there with the Council of Foreign Relations.

Q: Christopher's a nice man.

WILKOWSKI: Yes. I did some lecturing with the Council, Shirley Hoffstedler was also on the board of Occidental. A lot of very interesting people. Also, I had fun counseling students. I love working with students. In fact, I've been running a series of interns from Georgetown over at VITA, and that was the young lady who was here with her parents yesterday.

Q: It's a good college.

WILKOWSKI: After that, Carol Laise, then Director General of the Foreign Service, called from Washington and said, “Jean, what do you think about Nicaragua?” I guess this shouldn't be public.

Q: Mr. Who?

WILKOWSKI: Nicaragua.

Q: No, I think it's all right. Sure. That was not a classified conversation.

WILKOWSKI: No. “What do you think about Nicaragua?” And I said, “As what?”

She said, “Well, we'd like to send you down there to work with Somoza. [Tape turned off.]

So Carol thought that Nicaragua would be a good assignment, and I said, “Gee, Carol, after Zambia?”

She said, “Sure, why not? You know Central America, you know Spanish.” And she said, “What's more, Jean, we've got some problems down there with Somoza.”

I said, “I can believe that. He used to come over to Honduras all the time and swagger about, even boss me around when I was charg#.”

She said, “You know, some of our Ambassadors have been prone to get into bed with Somoza, and we're sure you won't do that.”

And I said jokingly, “Oh, Carol, I wouldn't be so sure about that. All kidding aside, the man's a bully, a tyrant, no respecter of U.S. representatives, and his behavior when he had come to visit his 'compadres' in Honduras was something awful. Carol, I'm telling you, before six months are up, I will either be declared persona non grata, or I will ask to be relieved and have to resign, because I am not going to be bossed around by that man.”

She said, “That's why we want you.” [Laughter]

Q: I didn't know this. It was a great thought. It was.

WILKOWSKI: Frankly, I said, “I don't know what policy you want me to articulate, but I really don't think it's the best assignment, Carol. If you've got anything else, fine.”

Well, because of this I was later called up by Phil Habib, then Under Secretary, and harshly asked, “What do you mean refusing an assignment?” I tried to explain.

He said, “That's no excuse.” I was surprised, because Phil Habib gained his reputation for being outspoken and calling the shots as he saw them.

But Carol came back to me, and said, “Do you know Father Ted Hesburgh, the president of Notre Dame?”

I said, “Of course, by reputation.”

She said, “How would you like to work with him? We're thinking of nominating him as Head of Delegation of the Science and Technology Conference.”

I said that would be very interesting.

So she said, “Well, he needs a backup person, U.S. coordinator in the Department. It's a three-year assignment getting this conference together.”

I said, “Okay,” and she said, “You know, you retain the title of Ambassador.” So that was three years off and on at the UN, but working out of an office in Washington and conferences in various parts of the world. But it was a very interesting assignment because, as you know, science and technology is not the exclusive province of the U.S. Government. It's 50 percent of the private sector, or more. That meant rallying the support of corporations to help us consider policy options. We must have had 200 businessmen working with us. We had 30 some-odd conferences around the United States even before taking on the UN and all its meetings.

Q: I was at one or two of those, yes. We had contact because I was with a business organization.

WILKOWSKI: That's true. So that was all very, very interesting. As a matter of fact, it was really through that conference that I got to know some of the corporate people who were on the advisory board to the UN Secretary General of the conference. As a result of that, I would say, and probably through some earlier connections in Milan, I later hooked up with the board of a multinational food company. Every time Hesburgh came to town, which was once a quarter, we'd make the rounds of the President, the Congress, the Senate and so forth.

Q: He is a good man to work with?

WILKOWSKI: Yes, wonderful.

Q: He's a nice man, isn't he?

WILKOWSKI: Definitely. A very decent sort of a person, knows everybody, and they know him. So if you really wanted to know who's who in Washington, he is the key. He'd want to see certain people, so I would set up the appointments and we would go. He's a very interesting man. As the result of my labors, I received an honorary degree from Notre Dame, which I prize very, very much because I had some interesting classmates there. Gorbachev's science advisor, David Rockefeller, Coretta King and other notables were in my class of honorees.

Q: Where did you go to college? I forget.

WILKOWSKI: I went to St. Mary-of-the-Woods College for my B.A., and the University of Wisconsin for my M.A., then Berkeley with Louise.

That's about it, Bill. That takes you through what my mother would say was my “hellish career.”

Q: I think it would be good if you'd go back and—I don't know whether we had this on tape or not. I'd like to get your comments on women and men, again, in the Foreign Service. I mean the point of the complementarity of the approach by women and men and the fact that this should give the Government and the Service a more comprehensive picture than it would get simply from, say, a total male reporting or a total female reporting.

WILKOWSKI: Yes, I made a statement on that many years ago to a Department historian in a book called Women in the Foreign Service. The author was Homer Caulkins. Back in the '50s or '60s, I felt as I still feel now.

I think that men generally tend to be more intellectual, more analytical, but it's very hard to generalize. I think women can be that way, too. There are many intellectual women in the professions these days. But I think women have a special compassionate quality, a certain sensitivity not as obvious in men. It's the caring-type thing, the nurturing aspect. It's built into women, I think, because, after all, they do bear children, they are mothers, and so they see things from an emotional point of view. I don't mean they are emotional, but when you look at a problem and analyze it, it isn't always 100% intellectual—people's motivations and feelings are involved, also personal experiences. Women are especially sensitive to this.

There is this other aspect to it, like the shooting of the Canadians and Americans at Victoria Falls in Zambia. How do you handle that thing? It's not all intellectual and analytical. How do you handle the eyewitness testimony when it comes in? Do you discard it, or do you try to get at the truth of the thing and let the Zambian Government know that this is what really happened? Because people experienced and described things. And that's the honest, true statement of the situation. Now I don't know whether that's a

woman's point of view or whether men would feel the same way about it. They may feel identically.

Q: I think people would react identically on that.

WILKOWSKI: They could react identically.

Q: If their business was government or making sure the facts were right. But I was interested in your comment that—I think it's very important personally—that you always take account of the intuitive factor. Intuition is a very important element in analysis, because not everything is susceptible to a perfectly, plain, rational, factual analysis. Bottom line, you got to have a hunch about things.

WILKOWSKI: Yes. And men have hunches, and they're very good at them, too. But women have strong intuitions, also. Analyzing people, and their reactions and knowing how to deal with them, also timing are very important, especially in diplomacy. There's a right time, and a wrong time to make proposals, drive for a negotiated settlement.

Q: Exactly.

WILKOWSKI: Both men and women can have a good feel for timing. Whether women are better or not, I don't know, possibly. Believe me, I don't want to rely too heavily on this and say, “I attribute my success in the Foreign Service to the fact that I'm a woman and I'm intuitive.” No, not that at all. We have different degrees of intuition, different degrees of intellectualism and analysis. I think when men and women do talk over a problem and how they are going to try and resolve that problem with individuals, groups of people, or nations, I think the results of such collaboration can be good, but the perspective and experience are richer. The old saying, two heads are better than one still holds; each brings separate gifts and talents. Results are bound to be better. Men and women have learned a lot over recent years in how to collaborate professionally.

Q: It's like a second opinion.

WILKOWSKI: Exactly.

Q: That's very important, and I think it should be, you know, factored in. And as the Service increasingly takes in women (at a rough annual percentage of 30, I understand) the more it's going to get automatically factored in. Now you can have some men who are very sensitive and intuitive, and you can have some women who are as cold as ice and basically intellectual analysts.

WILKOWSKI: Of course.

Q: I've always felt intuition is important in my own case, because I get hunches about things and I feel intuitively about certain people and so forth. You know, we used to kid around when we were serving in London about this factor. We called it the Celtic view, this is the way the Scots, the Irish and the Welsh look at things. Whereas the English think they're being highly analytical, which they aren't necessarily, really. They may kid themselves. As for those generalizations, they're all fun, but perhaps not too reliable as generalizations.

WILKOWSKI: I, too, urge caution on such generalizations though acting on hunches is important to me.

Q: What you need to deal with, the complexities of foreign relations these days, is to use all the talent you've got.

WILKOWSKI: That's right.

Q: And I felt this especially when I was working in the CIA. I felt frequently the human element and the human reactive element wouldn't get incorporated. As was once said, “If

somebody tried to put the whole Vietnam situation (when we were in the middle of it) on a computer, how would, you know...

WILKOWSKI: Won't work.

Q: But they couldn't find any place to factor in the Buddhists. They didn't fit in the computer, but you couldn't do Vietnam without the Buddhists. [Chuckle]

WILKOWSKI: You know, imagination is something else. Now I can't say that men generally are more or less imaginative. After all, men dominate Hollywood, don't they, and show business. You have some pretty imaginative things there. And play-writing.

Q: Like my brother-in-law.

WILKOWSKI: That's who I was thinking of, too. But I think that if I want to look at some reasons—and I haven't really stopped long enough nor did I prepare for this, to set down qualities that helped me in the Foreign Service. In the first part of my career—one third to one half of my career—I think I was very shy and very deferential because I was a woman and the times were more structured and conventional also. I didn't want to make a lot of mistakes. I wanted to succeed. But I think I curbed my imagination, yet in time I found that my imagination was probably one of my stronger points.

Q: Of course. Why not?

WILKOWSKI: That I do have ideas. I think I'm pretty good at ideas, and I think I'm good at making relationships. Certainly in the last part of my career, I think that was exceedingly helpful to me. And, here again, if you have to score men relative to women on a range of consistent qualities, I think you're on risky ground, but it's something worth thinking about. Women may tend to be more imaginative, but again, generalizations can be dangerous.

Q: Yes. Well, I think that's a fair point, and I think that it's important to be able to stand back and look at a situation or problem and say, “Now let me see what if here, and what if

there, and so forth." You do contingency planning this way and everybody should. I think it's very important to have this allowed for by people. I felt this in our analysis. I got very interested in the CIA and working on the national intelligence estimates, and they still have me on their rolls. Once in a while they call me over. Sometimes these estimates are done entirely too much on the basis of what they used to call "shoebox data," and now the shoebox data are all in a computer somewhere. People don't always stop to think about, "Well, what about the human element?" What's in that guy's mind? I mean, what is he thinking of?

WILKOWSKI: You certainly have to be able to fly by the seat of your pants in the Foreign Service and think on your feet, often while you're running, or flying.

Q: Oh, of course you do. And you do in any creative profession which is dealing with a whole lot of unknowns at one time, which you always are in the Foreign Service.

WILKOWSKI: And you're dealing more with people than you are with data. You're dealing a lot with data, but it's how people will act and react. People are very, very important. We're getting into a subject which I think is what David Newsom has written on in a book on the talents and qualities needed by any aspirant to the Foreign Service.

Q: David has a lot of wisdom and he puts it down very well.

WILKOWSKI: Yes. He's a good writer, and that's another qualification of a Foreign Service Officer. You have got to have some sense of how to put sentences together, make points, and argue cogently.

Q: You've got to be able to express yourself.

I shared your experience of being a charg#, because my Ambassador died and I was charg# for about four or five months after. He was a political appointee and died just before elections. So nobody was going to appoint anybody until after the new election.

And then Livy Merchant came back to Canada. He'd been there before. He looked at me and said, “You do it.” He did a lot of other things that interested him, or special errands for President Kennedy or whatever, but he just said, “You do it,” so I did it.

WILKOWSKI: So you ran the mission?

Q: So I ran the mission, in effect, for about a year and a half. We had a few minor crises. It was interesting, but nothing as exciting as you got in Honduras.

WILKOWSKI: Well, I'll never forget those Salvadoran planes coming over, the doors opening and bombs being kicked out. I couldn't believe it. It was like seeing a movie. And then going to the airport to receive emergency supplies on those big cargo planes to help nearly 60,000 refugees. I've got some pictures there out at the airport where I had a run-in with the President's wife. You know, she said, “These relief supplies can be just for Salvadorans. (The Hondurans had rounded up and incarcerated them.) It's going to be all for Hondurans.”

I said, “Look. It's a crisis here. Hondurans have created the crisis. There are people who are starving.”Q: Well, that world in Central America must be pretty awful.

WILKOWSKI: I'm still with it. I serve on the board of a non-profit organization with programs in other regions. It's Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA). We were recently asked to go down there on an AID program and train the Contras in carpentry and automobile repair, auto mechanics, plumbing, electricians and so forth. It was a matter put to the board. I just couldn't see our getting involved in such a politicized thing.

Q: You couldn't see it?

WILKOWSKI: I think those of us primarily in economic development tend to follow the flag a little bit too much. We're already in Afghanistan. We're running farm equipment out of Pakistan into Afghanistan to help restore farming. We're being asked to go into Poland

and Hungary. But running into Honduras and training Contras on Honduran soil so that they could apply and compete for jobs—even temporarily— against Hondurans? Maybe. It didn't strike me as being the most brilliant opportunity for us.

Q: I can see why they thought of it.

WILKOWSKI: Sure. It's easy money from AID.

Q: You know, it's a thought that comes naturally, but whether a private organization wants to have to explain that to its board is another question.

WILKOWSKI: VITA prides itself in being apolitical. Anyhow, do you know of anybody who would like to take that job as chairman of the board of VITA? [Laughter] Shall we conclude on that?

Q: All right, we'll conclude on that.

WILKOWSKI: Very well.

End of interview